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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
7 May 1963

*requested by  
1 May*



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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet Forces in Cuba

1. The buildup of Soviet Forces in Cuba began in the summer of 1962. Prior to this, only a few hundred military advisers and technicians had been present in Cuba.

2. The actual deployment began with the movement of SAM regiments and the armored groups. A total of six SAM regiments consisting of 24 battalions numbering about 5,000 men departed the USSR between mid-July and the end of August. The movement of the armored troops from the USSR apparently began late July and continued through the first weeks of September. It is estimated, based on tables of organization and equipment and billeting facilities associated with these groups, that about 5,000 troops were included in these units.

3. The forces associated with the strategic weapons systems--the IRBM's, the MRBM's, and the IL-28 aircraft--were probably deployed to Cuba concurrently with the SAM and the armored troops. It is estimated that the troops necessary to man these units totalled more than 5,000.

4. An additional 7,500 Soviet military personnel are also estimated to have been deployed to Cuba during this period so that at the time of the imposition of the quarantine at least 22,500 Soviet troops are believed to have been on the island. The 7,500 figure included personnel assigned to Headquarters and communications elements, the MIG aircraft units, cruise missile units, the KOMAR missile boats, and various other miscellaneous elements.

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5. Of the total of about 22,500 Soviet troops, the 5,000 who made up the four armored groups could have provided, in addition to Cuban Army forces, some effective opposition to an air and seaborne assault on Cuba. These troops were well equipped and capable of serving in a ground combat role. The remainder of the Soviet troops were engaged primarily in technical and administrative functions and the manning of strategic and defensive weapons systems. These troops would have had a combat potential but this potential would have been limited by their primary responsibilities for the operation of their respective weapons systems. Neutralization of these weapons systems such as the SAM system and jet fighter aircraft prior to the air and seaborne assault would have further degraded the combat potential of these forces.

6. More than 5,000 troops believed to have been associated with the strategic weapons were withdrawn with these weapons in November and December 1962 leaving an estimated 17,500 Soviet troops in Cuba. A careful evaluation of all evidence indicates that a minimum of 5,000 more Soviet personnel have left Cuba since mid-February. Most of these personnel are believed to have been military rather than civilian. There is no reliable evidence that more than a few hundred military personnel at most have arrived during these months. We cannot determine with any degree of certainty the specific units to which departing troops belonged and consequently we cannot estimate reductions on a unit basis. Our best judgment is that total Soviet military personnel strength in Cuba has probably been reduced by about 20 to 30 percent since mid-February.

7. The military picture in Cuba is in transition. There is a scaling down of the Soviet military presence. This reduction has been accompanied

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There is also evidence that Cuban troops are present in the camps of the four Soviet armored groups, possibly receiving training.

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8. Despite the departure of about 5,000 Soviet troops since mid-February.]

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[redacted] leads us to conclude that a substantial number of the Soviets leaving Cuba in the period February - April were probably drawn from the armored groupings. The effect of this is to lessen the number of Soviet ground combat troops now in Cuba who could effectively participate against invading forces.

9. A significant Soviet military presence remains in Cuba but the departure of some personnel without substantial replacement and the apparent emphasis on training functions have tended to reduce the overall combat potential of the Soviet forces there. They serve to supplement the Cuban Revolutionary Forces, particularly in the highly technical areas of SAM and jet fighter operations. Moreover, to both the Cubans and the Soviets, the presence of these troops has a significant psychological and political effect. They underscore the extent of the Soviet commitment to Castro and this, the Cubans hope, will suffice to deter US actions against Cuba.

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